DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 044 CG 009 858

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TITLE The Facilitation of Change: An Administrator's Dilemma.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Washington, D.C., March 30-April 13, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Responsibility; *Career Education; Change Agents; *Cooperative Education; Educational Change; *Educational Innovation; *Models; Public Schools; Role Perception; Speeches
IDENTIFIERS *Academy for Career Education

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to describe a strategy that facilitates the introduction of a large-scale innovation into public school settings. The principal focus is the new administrative role as it functions in this process. The context is the Experience-Based Career Education model (Academy for Career Education) designed and implemented by Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS). Experience-based career education exposes the student to a variety of content, methodologies and viewpoints relating the diversity of options and alternatives of the social-economic scene. More importantly, the program invites the student to confront these issues through self-study, observation and on-site experiences. The RBS model consists of three components: (1) basic skills; (2) student-economic-sector interactions; and (3) guidance and counseling. Academic skills and proficiencies are promoted through explication of their relationship to, and utility in, the world of work. Implementation of the program requires that the school leadership recognize and accept the need for change. RBS has developed a technology related to the definition, design, implementation and dissemination of experience-based career education. This technology stresses collaboration among RBS-intermediate units and/or county units or public school districts. The three-year study is currently in the replication stage, having been implemented initially in the Philadelphia schools. (Author/CJ)

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THE FACILITATION OF CHANGE: AN ADMINISTRATOR'S DILEMMA*

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The purpose of this paper is to describe a strategy that facilitates the introduction of a large-scale innovation into public school settings. The principal focus is the new administrative role as it functions in this process. The context is the Experience-Based Career Education model (Academy for Career Education) designed and implemented by Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS).

I. INTRODUCTION

The development and introduction of large-scale innovations into public schools and their concomitant change potential are continually emphasized in current educational literature. The programmatic focus of the National Institue of Education has been, in effect, an attempt to accelerate change. Development and wide-spread implementation of experience-based career education can make significant changes within the traditional educational setting. The operational concepts of (a) extensive utilization of community and economic sector resources, (b) new teaching-learning roles for students, staff and employers, (c) the high visibility of students and staff functioning in new settings, (d) the relocation of authority and responsibilities in new roles, and (e) the legitimatization of the economic sector as a contributing partner in public education, all place new and unusual demands and strains upon the host public school system. Therefore, however strong the need for educational programmatic innovations, the emphasis still must be allied with a mechanism for planned change on a continuous institu-

CG009858

*Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association convention, Washington, D.C., April, 1975.

tionalized basis. Lack of focus upon systemic planning for change as part of program development (including a consideration for schools as complex social systems) is a serious educational deficiency.

Hemphill[1] identifies two necessary components of a mechanism for planned change in his discussion of educational development. Educational development consists of product development and change support. The product development process seeks to improve educational practices by creating programs, methods and materials. The change support process is concerned with improving the behavior of those engaged in the practice of education. The emphasis is upon attitudes, motives, values and skills. This focus can range from the individual to relationships among social systems. Change support, in effect, deals with overcoming the internal forces of resistance that are generated when an organization becomes involved with implementing an innovation and lacks the necessary functional skills.

II. THE RBS CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The RBS experience-based career education program (Academy for Career Education) attempts to overcome: (1) limited and inaccurate information about the economic environment and its opportunities and requirements; (2) equally critical deficiencies in knowledge of "self" in terms of strengths and weaknesses, values, goals and plans; and (3) lack of understanding of the degree to which academic accomplishments can service there emerging life-career goals. Experience-based career education exposes the student to a variety of content, methodology and viewpoints relating the diversity of options and alternatives of the social-economic scene. More importantly, the student is invited to confront these issues through self-study, observation and on-site experiences. These experiences enable the student to

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[1]John K. Hemphill, "Educational Development," The Urban Review, XXXI (October, 1969), pp. 23-24.

manage the conflict and dissonance inherent in career definition and preparation in an open, rational, yet personally-derived, manner.

The RBS model consists of three components: (1) basic skills, (2) student-economic- sector interactions, and (3) guidance and counseling. The central theme of these three components is the development and utiliation of a career-interest through exploration and specialization in selected employer-based experiences. Academic skills and proficiencies are promoted through explication of their relationship to, and utility in, the world of work. The internalization and integration of academic and occupational experiences are facilitated through a guidance and counseling program that features group and individual counseling complemented by instructional programs in information-processing, communications and problem-solving.

The Academy for Career Education has evolved over a three year period. The last two years have featured a collaboration between RBS and the Philadelphia public school system. During the academic year of 1974-75, a group of 275 students participated in the program. The operating staff consists of school district teachers and RBS personnel. There are currently 85 participating employers and agencies representing commerce, industry, utilities, unions and social services.

As an outcome of these activities, specifications for replicating the RBS model have been prepared. Specifications for replication are intended to convey enough information about the concept of experience-based career education so that a potential user can implement a similar program tailored to the needs of his student body, while taking into account such factors as his own community, available employer resources, costs and other variables unique to his district. The sources for specifications' content are the critical elements of: (1) the three functional components of the program, in terms of their curricula, procedures and organizations, and

(2) the management system that coordinates and integrates the entire experience-based program.

The audience for any specific element of specifications is the educational role responsible for decision-making at that particular level. Specifications are guidelines, information, and processes for decision-making and action. Specifications do not provide detailed operational plans for duplicating the concept in a particular district. Rather, the informed decision-maker extrapolates from the specification level to the operational level dictated by local needs. This definition of specifications recognizes the high level of competence that exists in local districts. It also capitalizes on the commitment generated for a plan when the user has had a part in its design and planning.

III. THE ADMINISTRATOR'S ROLE IN CHANGE SUPPORT

The ability of a school system to implement the Academy for Career Education is closely interrelated with its success in school-wide recognition of the need for such a program and the establishment of an accepting climate. Implementation failure is predicted if the necessary time and effort for these preparatory steps are not taken. To undertake an Academy program requires time, energy and cooperation of much of the school's staff and many eonomic sector representatives. In fact, to gain a perspective of the forces at work takes hours of planning and explorative discussion. Therefore, at the superintendency level, delegation of authority and responsibility to subordinate administrators and teachers is imperative if the staff is to be convinced that the new program is sanctioned.

The ability of the school district to implement this major programmatic change successfully depends on:

- Long-range commitment of school board and superintendent to Academy program planning and implementation.
- Willingness of the school board and superintendency team to

devote substantial time to the process of planning for an Academy program.

- Recognition by leadership of the normal human reaction to resist a new program and the consequent need to adopt a strategy designed to overcome negative reaction.

- Ability to achieve a balance within the administrative team to insure an orderly transition from traditional program orientation to an emphasis on innovations in general, and the Academy in specific.

A vital key to success is the ability of the implementing school system to generate an attitude that change is normal and good. The Academy for Career Education places stress upon its host organization for revised structural patterns. The required administrator, student and staff roles may promote reactive changes within many elements of the existing structure. Thus, the administration must be change-oriented. Leadership roles must provide the climate for rapid movement towards a new educational format that values student experiences in a variety of community settings. Success of the Academy model will be in proportion to the school-wide understanding of, planning for, commitment to, and personal involvement in, the implementation of the program elements. This will require a reorientation in thinking and acting for many administrators and staff: honest commitment to a new program concept. Beyond verbalization, there must be confirming administrative behavior to sanction this new mode of operating. The underlying rationale for this operational imperative is a redistribution of power within the structure of the organization. Power is defined as the locus of formal authority and influence. Redistribution signifies an alternative in the traditional practices utilized by the power structure in making decisions. Redistribution of power implies a movement toward participative decision-making practices shared throughout the social system that is the school. This redistribution of power concept operates to involve changes in a total mix of associated social system expectations involving: organizational restructuring, dynamic leadership style, widespread role change, supportive

value and norm development, and an emphasis upon the problem solving/ decision-making processes.

Any administrative preparation for program implementation should be approached simultaneously on two fronts, the psychological and the rational. The psychological approach is required to gain meaningful staff acceptance and support for the program. The rational aspects are concerned with determination of all the facts, data, local alternatives, and practical advantages and disadvantages related to local implementation. The basic tools of the rational approach are the functional skills of: (1) comprehensive planning, (2) project management, and (3) communications. The district then is prepared to fully utilize the specifications and training offered by the developer to operationalize its own career education program.

IV. THE RBS APPROACH TO LARGE-SCALE IMPLEMENTATION

Research for Better Schools has developed a technology related to the definition, design, implementation and dissemination of experience-based career education. The development of this capability has been a function of the three-year operation of the Academy for Career Education and other relevant activities of RBS. This extensive technology includes program specifications, products and processes that, along with technical assistance, will facilitate the dissemination and implementation of the RBS concept of experience-based career education. The strategy emphasizes technical assistance as a collaboration among RBS-intermediate units and/or county units-public school districts.

This approach is based upon the premise that many worthy educational programs introduced into public schools fail, because the implementation focus is solely upon the content of the program to the exclusion of the dynamic change process inherent in its introduction into the schools and the absence of the basic functional skills of comprehensive planning, pro-

ject management and communications. This approach places county or intermediate school units in the role of a broker, introducing its allied school districts to new inputs and providing the developers of these inputs with appropriate laboratory settings. In addition, within this strategy RBS and the intermediate school unit collaboratively assume the role of facilitator of change, developing in the school setting the program support needed to overcome the resistance to the installation of career education, and training the staff in the basic functional skills for implementation. A cadre of participating school personnel, trained by RBS and the intermediate unit, is the instrumentality through which program support and functional skills are developed within the participating school districts.

V. SOME ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOLS

The RBS staff ¢hold certain basic assumptions relative to schools. These assumptions are essential to and direct the proposed strategies:

1. School teachers and administrators, in the main, are interested in improving their work; if given the opportunity, they will take steps to adopt new programs and practices.
2. Schools are complex social systems; a change in one element of the system will affect all other elements. Therefore, a plan to introduce a new program or practice must consider how all interests in the school might respond.
3. Steps toward educational improvement will be accepted and pursued more wholeheartedly, and have a longer lasting effect on practice, if local districts play significant roles in planning and adapting these new programs to conform to local needs rather than simply having them imported from outside.
4. Local teachers and administrators are capable, with guidance and initial assistance from agencies such as RBS and state-

level educational units, of bringing about substantial and enduring change in their schools.

5. Efforts to reform schools need the planful use of intersystemic links between schools and other interested institutions such as laboratories and state and middle-level departments of education.

6. The dissemination of specialized innovations to schools will be unproductive unless accompanied by efforts to bring about organizational conditions, particularly faculty competence and motivation, in which specialized innovations might be sustained.

VI. EXPLICATION OF THE STRATEGY

Awareness Phase

As part of the current year's replication activities, the RBS staff has conducted awareness conferences in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. Regional, intermediate and county public school agencies have been utilized as the organizing structures for these conferences. The RBS staff provides the program, materials and personnel for these meetings. The technical knowledge that resides within RBS has been utilized to design these conferences to achieve full effect and participant involvement. The audience for each conference is primarily school board members, superintendents and middle-level administrators from districts within each regional, intermediate or county unit. Invitations to attend these conferences include brochures that describe the RBS career education model. As a consequence of these meetings, a list of potential implementors of experience-based career education is compiled.

The strategy employed to disseminate the RBS career education model and to extend the technical assistance utilizes this awareness focus as its initial phase. The critical element of this activity is the sponsorship

of the program by the middle-level department of education (IU) and its collaboration with RBS in terms of its administrative structure and membership. This is a conscious move to overcome the significant communications barrier existing between development-oriented labs and school-level practitioners.

Articulation Phase

These activities provide in-depth decision-making data. For school districts that indicate continuing interest, a second information-processing activity is conducted within the IU structure. These meetings feature specifications, program descriptions, staffing and cost data, and indicate the required level of district commitment in terms of money and sanctions. The audience is primarily administrators and instructional supervisors who are capable of making fiscal and time commitments to the program. In-service experiences are organized by these administrators to inform their community and school staff of this innovation. These personnel, with RBS-IU cooperation, collaborate in the design of the in-service experience. These meetings focus upon career education program content, but knowledge of elements of change support and the utility of the functional skills are reflected in the format.

Planning Phase

Those school districts now comm the implementation of the experience-based career education model select a planning group to continue the process. The IU continues as the site for the meeting of several planning groups. RBS provides the technical assistance in terms of change support and functional skills. The close relationship between the IU and RBS staff provides a mechanism to transfer knowledge of the innovation, dynamics of the change process, and functional skills to the IU. This legitimatizes the role of the IU as a disseminator of the career education model. The

IU can utilize the planning group members to further disseminate the innovation.

Implementation Phase

The work groups formed to plan for experience-based career education continue to meet within the IU sponsorship during implementation. These meetings permit cross-district communications in terms of problem definition and resolution, as well as psychological support. The IU, having collaborated with RBS over an extended period of time, has become knowledgeable about the experience-based career education model and the change process. The technical assistance function, in significant ways, is now part of the service they can offer their allied local districts. There are mutual benefits to RBS in terms of program-related feedback and knowledge of the diffusion and dissemination process.

VII. SUMMARY

As a consequence of this strategy, there is a beginning career education capability in several districts developed under the sponsorship of the RBS-intermediate unit (IU) collaboration. The IU functions to: (1) develop its ability to effectively introduce participating schools to career education; (2) develop a capacity to communicate with employers and serve as a local clearinghouse for them and the school districts; and (3) establish a network relationship with other IUs within the state. The initial RBS role is that of training both the IU staff and the participating schools' operational personnel. This training relationship merges into a consulting arrangement as the client system (IU and participating school districts) grows in knowledge and experience. Concomitantly, RBS receives feedback from the program operations and the change support efforts. This expanding knowledge base is utilized to effect changes in the career education program and implementation procedures.